



United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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To: State and Center Directors

From: Assistant Director, Fire and Aviation

Subject: Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Guidance for the Department of the Interior (DOI) Medical Standards Program (MSP) Process for Fiscal Year (FY) 2019

Program Area: Fire and Aviation Management

Purpose: This instruction memorandum (IM) provides BLM-specific direction for employee participation in the DOI MSP process for FY 2019. Participation is required as a condition of hire and continued employment for firefighting positions requiring arduous, moderate or light duty, and prior to participating in the work capacity test (WCT).

This IM augments direction for the WCT found in Office of Wildland Fire (OWF) Policy Memorandum 2016-014 the 2019 *Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations*, chapters 2 and 13.

Policy/Action: As per OWF Policy Memorandum 2016-014: “All employees (incumbents and applicants) must take an examination meeting Federal Interagency Wildland Firefighter Medical Standards every three years regardless of employment status and hiring authority, including emergency firefighters (Administratively Determined-AD/casual hires) and collateral duty firefighters who participate in arduous wildland fire activities. An examination taken and successfully cleared in accordance with DOI MSP direction is required prior to participating in the Arduous Duty Work Capacity Test (Pack Test), performing arduous duty wildland fire duties, or any agency sanctioned physical fitness training to prepare for these duties. In the years between the periodic examinations, an employee will self-certify their medical concerns and risk in taking the Work Capacity Test.” All employees regardless of employment status who participate in moderate or light duty wildland fire activities are required to complete the Health Screening Questionnaire (HSQ) and be medically cleared prior to attempting the WCT.

Arduous Duty

Exam/Self-Certification Periodicity and Changes in Medical Status:

- All employees who have not completed a comprehensive baseline exam must complete a baseline exam through CHS prior to participating in the WCT.
- A baseline or periodic exam is required every 36-months from the date of the exam regardless of the qualification date.
- If an employee's medical qualification expires prior to successfully clearing a periodic exam or self-certification, they are no longer medically qualified.

Managers and other Client Access System (CAS) users will not receive automatic notifications of firefighters due for periodic exams but may run a report in CAS to determine the need for periodic exams. By default, all employees who completed exams in 2016 are due for periodic exams. Contact the DOI MSP for questions or clarification.

Self-Certification

Annual self-certifications between periodic exams must be completed within 12-months of the previous medical qualification date. For FY 2019, the self-certification process will be initiated by the employee through the CHS Examinee Access System (EAS). Supervisors may order a self-certification for employees prior to the 12-month expiration of the last medical qualification to accommodate unit level alignment of recertification schedule (RT-130, medical qualification or work capacity testing).

A self-certification must precede the arduous work capacity test by no more than 45 days prior to fitness testing. For detailed information please visit the DOI MSP website.

http://www.nifc.gov/medical_standards

Alaska AD/EFF

The BLM is implementing medical exams for BLM casual hires in Alaska. Exams are being delivered in village locations on select dates and also may be scheduled at various clinics in Alaska. Please visit the Alaska Fire Service website at: <https://afs.ak.blm.gov/eff.php> for more information on the process.

Non-Qualification Process

If an individual receives a determination of "Not Qualified", the servicing human resources office (SHRO) will initiate the Risk Mitigation/Waiver (RM/W) process. As an alternative, employees may also submit further medical information for Reviewing Medical Officer (RMO) review at any time by contacting DOI MSP Customer Service.

Risk Mitigation/Waiver Process

The risk mitigation/waiver (RM/W) process is available for applicants not meeting one or more of the Federal Interagency Wildland Firefighter Medical Standards. Existing waivers or waivers with restrictions remain valid unless there is a change in medical condition. For detailed information on the DOI MSP, and the RM/W process guidance, please visit the DOI MSP website. http://www.nifc.gov/medical_standards

For 2019, the BLM Fire Operations Group (FOG) representative for each state will be responsible for reviewing and providing recommendations on all proposed RM/W where the non-qualifying health condition is static and stable. Review of all RM/W for non-qualifying health conditions that are NOT static and stable will be reviewed at the national level by the Wildland Fire Safety Program Manager (WFSPM). The WFSPM will also be responsible for second-level reviews during DOI medical review boards. There should be emphasis on ensuring non-qualifying conditions are static and stable prior to review. A static and stable determination may only be made by the contracted RMO. Contact the DOI MSP for any questions regarding this process.

An RMO review may also be requested through the DOI MSP if the fire management officer (FMO) or SHRO has concerns about a clinician's performance of the DOI MSP exam. All exams are subject to medical review by the DOI MSP, which could potentially change the examinee's clearance.

Moderate and Light Duty

Beginning in February 2019, the medical screening process for light and moderate work capacity testing (HSQ) was centralized and automated through CHS. Fire Management Officers (or delegate) may request HSQs for light and moderate fitness participants through the CAS. Participants will be sent log-in information to access and complete the HSQ via the CHS EAS on-line. If significant health issues are identified on the HSQ, the examinee will be provided additional instructions on how to obtain supporting information needed for medical clearance. The OF178 exam will no longer be used. The employee may need to visit his/her personal physician to obtain the recommended additional medical information and is responsible for any related costs. Once cleared on the HSQ, the employee will receive a *Certificate of Medical Qualification/Clearance* to participate in the WCT. Detailed instructions for FMOs or CAS users on implementation of the new light and moderate clearance process can be found at the DOI MSP Website. https://www.nifc.gov/medical_standards

Proof of Medical Qualification/Successful Health Screening for WCT

Medical qualification/clearance must be verified by the WCT Administrator, FMO or delegate prior to the WCT. *Certificates of Medical Qualification/Clearance* for arduous, moderate and light personnel are the **ONLY** forms that serve as verification of medical qualification, and should be the only documentation produced prior to participating in the WCT. *Certificates of Medical Qualification/Clearance* can be printed by the firefighter through CHS using the EAS, the same system used by firefighters to view exam results; or by the FMO through the CAS, the same system used by managers to order and manage exams.

Exam Payment

All CHS exams are centrally-funded at the national level. Firefighters should not pay for or be billed for CHS exams.

Additional medical tests not required by the standard DOI MSP CHS medical exam are not authorized. If the examining clinician recommends further tests to determine firefighter medical clearance, prior approval by the SHRO/FMO is required. Additional testing or treatment requested by the employee/applicant shall be at the employee's own expense.

Timeframe: Effective immediately.

Budget Impact: There is no direct financial impact to states/centers/units. Costs of exams are centrally funded at the national level.

Background: Agency administrators and supervisors are responsible for the occupational health and safety of their employees performing wildland fire activities, and may require employees to take a medical examination at any time. Established medical qualification programs, as stated in 5 Code of Federal Regulation 339, provide consistent medical standards in order to safeguard the health of employees whose work may subject them or others to significant health and safety risks due to occupational or environmental exposure or demand.

The DOI MSP, using the services of CHS, is fully implemented - including FY 2019 implementation of all casual employee examinations in Alaska.

Manual/Handbook Sections Affected: *Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations*, chapters 2 and 13.

Coordination: This IM has been coordinated with the Fire and Aviation Directorate, Division of Fire Operations (FA-300), the National Fire Safety Program Manager (FA-100), the Fire and Aviation Directorate Human Resources Officer (FA-220) and the Fire and Aviation Directorate Equal Employment Opportunity Manager (FA-120).

Contact: Specific exam questions should be routed to the DOI MSP customer service representatives, 1-888-286-2521, or wlfcsr@blm.gov.

Other program questions should be sent to Bodie Ronk, BLM Wildland Fire Safety Program Manager (acting), 208-258-4585, or bronk@blm.gov.

Human resources or SHRO questions should be sent to the Cindy Pogue, Fire and Aviation Human Resources Officer, 208-387-5523, or cpogue@blm.gov.

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